

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. – 15. (Canceled)

16. (Original) A lithographic projection apparatus, comprising:
a radiation system;
a first object table arranged in a radiation path from said radiation system;
a second object table adapted to be arranged in a path of radiation from said first object table;
a projection system arranged in said path of radiation from said first object table to said second object table;
a sealing member disposed proximate an object having a substantially flat surface, said object being held by said second object table,
wherein said sealing member defines an inlet adapted to introduce gas into a space reserved between said sealing member and said object, and
wherein said sealing member defines an outlet spaced apart from said inlet, said outlet being adapted to evacuate gas from said space reserved between said sealing member and said object.
17. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the gas in the space between said sealing member and said object maintains a gap therebetween.
18. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said gap is in a range of 5 μm to 10 μm .
19. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said gap is substantially constant.
20. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said gas is at least one of air and nitrogen.

21. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said gas escapes into atmosphere through said outlet.

22. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, further comprising a pump system connected to said outlet, said pump system being configured to pump away said gas through said outlet.

23. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said gas is supplied through said inlet at a pressure of several atmospheres to generate forces to maintain a gap between said object and said sealing member.

24. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said sealing member further defines a groove formed in a surface of said sealing member opposing the substantially flat surface of said object, said groove being connected to at least one of said inlet and said outlet.

25. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said sealing member further comprises a second outlet disposed adjacent to said inlet, and a vacuum pump connected to said second outlet to evacuate said gas.

26. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said sealing member further defines a plurality of spaced apart indentations in one surface of said sealing member defining said gap, said indentations being filled with porous material; and
gas supply conduits structured to supply gas under pressure to said indentations.

27. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein a surface of the sealing member and the substantially flat surface of said object define a locally isolated region.

28. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 27, wherein said outlet is closer to said locally isolated region than said inlet is to said locally isolated region.

29. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 27, wherein said sealing member isolates said locally isolated region from the atmosphere.

30. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said object is movable parallel to a surface of said sealing member.

31. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said object is movable relative to said seal member in at least two degrees of freedom.

32. (Withdrawn) A method of maintaining a seal between a sealing member and an object having a substantially flat surface to provide an isolated region, comprising:

introducing pressurized gas into a gap between said sealing member and said object; and

evacuating said pressurized gas from said gap proximate a position where said pressurized gas was introduced.

33. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 32, further comprising:
maintaining said gap in a range between 5 μm to 10 μm .

34. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 33, further comprising:
maintaining said gap substantially constant.

35. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 32, further comprising:
moving said object relative to said sealing member while maintaining said seal.

36. (Original) A lithographic projection apparatus, comprising:
a radiation system;
an object table adapted to be arranged in a path of radiation from said radiation system;
a projection system arranged in said path of radiation from said radiation system to said object table;
a sealing member disposed proximate an object having a substantially flat surface, said object being held by said object table,

wherein said sealing member defines an inlet adapted to introduce gas into a space reserved between said sealing member and said object, and

wherein said sealing member defines an outlet spaced apart from said inlet, said outlet being adapted to evacuate gas from said space reserved between said sealing member and said object.

37. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 36, further comprising a pump system connected to said outlet, said pump system being configured to pump away said gas through said outlet.

38. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 36, wherein said sealing member further comprises a second outlet disposed adjacent to said inlet, and a vacuum pump connected to said second outlet to evacuate said gas.

39. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 36, wherein a surface of the sealing member and the substantially flat surface of said object define a locally isolated region.

40. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said sealing member isolates said locally isolated region from the atmosphere.

41. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 36, wherein said object is movable relative to said seal member in at least two degrees of freedom.